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SERMON CCCCIX.

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THE ECLIPSED LUMINARY.

"If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" —Mat. vi. 23.

Our Savior, in this connexion, brings an illustration from the eye. *If thine eye be single*, that is, if it be sound, healthy, *thy whole body will be full of light.* The individual will perceive clearly, and walk correctly: he will be, not only a light to himself, but a safe guide to others.

But if the eye is diseased—double, wavering, then the whole body is full of darkness. Every thing is confused, and the individual not only stumbles himself, but all who depend upon him, or follow him, stumble likewise.

The light in a person, strictly speaking, is reason and conscience—his intellectual and moral nature.

The conscience corrected, and the heart purified by truth, enable him both to see and to shine. The light of truth, of conscience, and a holy character, extinguished, and darkness put where there was, and where, from the very nature of the case, there should be light—put instead of the light, becomes truly very *great darkness.* The principle then is simply this: if where light was and light should be, there is put darkness, *the darkness is very great.* To one who has always been blest with vision, who has looked freely forth upon all the beauties and wonders of nature and art, and who has always directed at will his own steps, but whose sight should be suddenly destroyed, and darkness at once fill and surround him—to him who is the subject of the cala-

mity, and remembers the contrast, how *great the darkness.* Or take the case of one who has been spiritually enlightened—enlightened from above, who was filled with light, and became a body of light to others, let all that light be put out, and darkness take its place, how great is that darkness?

This is the sentiment I propose to illustrate at the present time. *That the Christian when he ceases to shine and darkness comes in the place of his light, it is very great darkness.* This is a case which not unfrequently occurs. It is often an actual condition of things. But if a *true* Christian, the dimness, the darkness are but temporary; the foulness will be purged out, the cloud will pass away, and he will yet shine on earth, and shine yet brighter in heaven.

It is a sad truth, implied in our text, and stated in our proposition, that the Christian does become darkness in the world sometimes; and the process is an easy one, and easily explained. If *his faith* is not corrupted, the great *objects* of his faith pass from his view; rather he turns away from them; they are lost sight of for a season. Then his conscience falls into slumber, the heart grows callous and is soon defiled. Thus becoming corrupt and worldly within, he is irregular and disobedient without; his conduct is a departure from the spirit and the precepts of the gospel; his life is wanting in all the clear manifestations of Godliness. While the *fact* of the change is thus sad, the *effects* of it are far more so.

The Christian changed from light to darkness—*how great is that darkness?* This appears, if we consider,

I. In the first place, *the mere negative loss,* in his forbearing to let his light shine. He has been made a luminous body, but he has ceased to shine. How much need of his light in the scene in which he moves. How much darkness to be removed; how little moral light shed for its removal; how much good he would do, by steadily shining; how much *did he* do in the days of his soundness and integrity. The world are reminded of truth and duty, and the way to gain God's favor and final acceptance. They are made to see that there is difference between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not. They see the power of the religious principle—the excellence and the loveliness of true piety. Impressions are made that are abiding. Some are convinced and won to the way of life: the clear and beautiful shining of that disciple at once draws them, and illumines the way of their return to God. Many may be, yea, often *are,* drawn to the path of peace, by the attractive radiance of the pure, faithful disciple.

Another consideration, is *the great expense at which he was prepared to shine.* He who was the brightness of the Father's

glory, and who is now the light of the world, came down to the earth, and died upon the cross, that the sins of that disciple might be blotted out, that the Spirit might be sent to renew his nature, and so fit him to reflect the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and be a living light in his sphere. But when he ceases to shine, all that expense is so far lost. Christ's object in dying for him, and changing him by his Spirit, was not to save his single solitary soul, but that he should be an agent in saving others. But when he ceases to shine, he ceases to do any good in the world. All the blessed effects, we have considered, cease. There is a great and sad loss—a loss in part of the Savior's death for him, and the Savior's work of renovation upon his heart—a loss utterly, of all the good impressions and saving reformations, which might and ought to have been produced, by the power of his shining—the light of his example. In view, then, of the *negative* consideration, the mere loss experienced, we may begin to exclaim, how *great the darkness!* But the exclamation becomes more emphatic when we consider,

II. In the next place, *some of the positive evils in the case.* It is not a simple subtraction of so much good which might have been done; because there is no neutrality in influence. He that is not for Christ is against him. If we gather not with him, we scatter abroad. If we shed not light, we shed darkness, and how great must be that darkness.

Because it is a *very conspicuous darkness*—a darkness peculiarly visible. It is so, on account of the change which has occurred. Yesterday, it is remembered, he was a shining body; to-day, it is seen, he is obscured, and sheds no ray. A change, so great as from light to darkness, is a very notable change. Multitudes who gave little heed to the shining of that Christian, are all eagerness and wonder the moment he ceases to shine; thus it becomes a peculiarly visible darkness.

It is an *incongruous, unnatural* darkness, inasmuch as it is a body of light, so to speak, *radiating darkness.* How strange! what has happened? Who can account for so monstrous a phenomenon? Were it the darkness of night, it would not be thought of; it would be congenial, and all would go to their repose. But it is the darkness of an eclipse; how much greater in its effects, than the darkness of the thickest night. To have the sun pass out of sight in the order of nature, is a trifle. But to have him turned into blackness in his meridian position, to have night, as it were, issuing from the face of the King of day, fills all minds with amazement.

When the Christian becomes darkness, it is the darkness of *an eclipsed luminary;* and we know that men will gaze at such a

sight—all eyes will centre there. How wonderful was the scene of the sun's momentary, utter extinction, which occurred early in the present century. All eyes, at that instant, were directed upward—the interest growing more and more intense, as the darkness spread over the disk of the great luminary, until the last ray went out, when an involuntary shuddering seized every heart. The light that was *in the sun* then became darkness; and who that saw it has forgotten, and yet who can describe, *how great was that darkness.*

The *vividness of the impression* which this sort of darkness makes, is another consideration to be put into the estimate. It so infixes itself in the memory—the world gaze and never forget: they carry, it may be, the recollection to hell with them, and there curse for ever the memory of these eclipsed luminaries.

It is a darkness *the wicked love to look at* and feed upon; they seem to have an intense relish for it. Like the owl at heavy midnight, they strain and distend their utmost capacity of vision, that they may drink in the congenial gloom. Not only do they love an interpretation of the Bible, which blots out all the distinctive glory, and searching meaning of this book, they love much more, a comment in the life of the disciple, which contradicts the voice, or mitigates the light, issuing from these holy pages.

But I have not said the whole about this darkness:—not only is it a conspicuous darkness; an incongruous, unnatural darkness; an impressive darkness; an attractive darkness; it is injurious upon the course of the world—fatal to the souls of men. We have seen, first, that it is a sight, which brings all eyes to behold it; then it brings destruction upon multitudes who do behold it.

The influence of the lapsed, obscured christian, goes to accomplish all this mischief, because *it tends to unsettle the minds of men* as to the truth of religion, and of all the great doctrines of religion. His own principles become unsound, and this is the darkening of his own mind; then he diffuses these unsound principles, and so darkens others. His standing, as a disciple of Christ, enables him to do it. He gives currency to error—to false doctrine, as he could not do in other circumstances; for he is clothed with a species of authority, for his work of corruption and ruin. He strikes a heavy blow, and it falls upon the very foundations. The sentiment is deposited in the breasts of many, to work there silent and deadly, that there is no reality in religion; it is an empty cheat; this great spiritual change so much talked about, is nought but delusion: it has no power upon the character—nothing permanent in the results.

But his influence goes not only to corrupt the *principles* of men, it corrupts also the *practice*. Such an one leads the way in bad practice. He authenticates and gives currency to disobedience—

the breaking down of God's laws. If he is a sabbath breaker, he brings, so far as he can, the authority of Christ and his religion, to sanction sabbath breaking; if fraudulent, to sanction fraud; if impure, to sanction impurity. So he propagates his misdeeds: he rears up and draws after him a train to do as he does; and then to shelter themselves from rebukes without, and goadings within, under the wing of his religious profession—under the authority of his christian life.

It is true the *Bible* speaks differently, yea oppositely: if these followers of the blind guides would go there, they would be instructed and corrected. But the christian's life—the spirit, the conduct, of the professor of godliness, is all the bible multitudes ever read. Here the page they gaze upon; here the text they quote; here the authority they bow to: they get their impressions and notions here, and so walk according to this rule. Some are made sceptics; the lapsed christian's life, the argument—the dark demonstration, which has turned them into infidels, and profane, and bitter revilers. Others say, 'if that be religion, we wish to have nothing to do with it: if that be a state of grace, the Lord grant that we may live and die in a state of nature. Others are put perfectly at rest on the great question of salvation. They think they see so little difference between men of the church and men of the world, there is very little ground for alarm. If the former are safe, the latter cannot be in any great danger. God certainly will not predicate opposite destinies, upon distinctions of character, too small and too faint to be seen. Others, who feel some solicitude about their souls, and try somewhat for a better state, know not whither to go, nor what they must become. The way is all dark to them. They wander wearily about, and find no savior, no hope. They fix their eye, it may be, upon some dim, doubtful, disciple, in order that their case may be an easy one, and then settle down upon something short of Christ. There can be no question, but one false hope begets another; a low, uncertain character for godliness, propagates its kind. The consequence is, that many, who seem to set out for heaven, lose their way, and lose their souls. How sad, that the person who should have illumined his path, and led him onward, and upward, was the dark impediment, over which he stumbled and perished. Had that christian been a light in his sphere, that friend, that neighbor, would have gone to heaven; his light being darkness, that friend, that neighbor, went to hell. *How great was that darkness.*

Suppose, now, that all the christians in a given place were like him—the entire church in that place obscured—all her light put out, all distinctive truth blotted from her creed, and silenced in her pulpit, and wiped from the life of her members; and error and dishonesty and all forms of ungodliness put in stead, and going

forth, as it were, under heaven's great seal; who can estimate the condition, or paint the blackness of that darkness? We call it a sad condition in a community, if there is nothing *in favor* of religion. No lights alluring to heaven, no lives speaking for God and the soul; no characters that are living arguments for his truth and cause. But infinitely more sad, if every thing, in the name and form and profession of religion, goes directly to discredit religion; the lives, which should be arguments in favor of God's truth and cause, are all arguments against it; the influences which should press toward heaven, become not merely negative but push positively and mightily toward hell. Native, full grown, unregenerated sinners, are comparatively harmless, let them constitute the great mass of a population; but this regeneration backward—this falsifying the true and the holy—this putting out light and putting on darkness instead, making men doubt, making them disbelieve, making them stumble—solemnly authenticating the way to hell—giving a sort of sacredness to the broad road, and giving to multitudes, not the baptism *of* fire, but a baptism, a sealing *for* the fire which shall never be quenched—what mind other than the Infinite Mind can take in the whole extent of the evil.

I have made the supposition of a church all turned to darkness, and drawn the picture, and presented it to your imagination, that you may see and feel and exclaim—*how great the darkness.* In making some remarks upon this sentiment and discussion, it comes very obviously to speak,

1. In the first place, *of the responsibility of the Christian*—his responsibility, as one always in view, belonging to a city set on an hill, having no neutrality, always either for his Master, or against him; always shedding either light or darkness; if darkness—darkness of a strange and destructive sort—his responsibility as one, shut up to this necessity, and to abide under it for ever. He may *go* back, but he never can *get* back, to be a simple, original, impenitent sinner as he once was. That condition was comparatively a negative one. Now he is chained to the necessity of doing, in a pre-eminent sense, positive good or evil. He is professedly regenerated, and it will be in its fruits, in a pre-eminent degree, a regeneration for heaven or hell. There is a great responsibility in this sort of necessity, abiding upon him, and holding him, as with links of adamant, to these immense consequences. If he is right in heart, right in life—living devotedly to him who died to save; everything—time, talents, property, consecrated to the cause of redemption, there is no telling what his Lord may enable him to do. Some vast tract of desert may become, through him, a well watered garden—some hundreds, perhaps thousands of souls, may stand up in heaven, and point to him, as the author under God, of their mighty joys. If he pursue the other course, the consequences will

be equally vast and interminable, but directly the opposite. Darkness will take the place of the light, death eternal the place of the life eternal. Oh, the guilt of the perversion; the responsibility of the substitution. He who substitutes a base coin for a pure one, does a slight injury. He who puts a deadly potion in the place of a healthful beverage, does a great wrong, and incurs a heavy responsibility. He who extinguishes the beaconlight, on the rock bound coast, amid the raging of the midnight storm, putting darkness before the mariner's eye, and despair in the mariner's heart, brings upon himself greater guilt and a weightier doom. But he, who puts out the light of truth and of a holy example, and puts instead, the darkness of gospel error, and christian sinning, causing multitudes to make shipwreck of faith and of their souls too—that person with the vows of God upon him, goes up higher, far higher in the scale of guilt, and will go, unless he repent, far lower in the gulph of fire beneath. How solemn, *awful* almost, the christian's responsibility. Let me die and go alone to my place, rather than administer to any such results as these.

But there is no reason to shrink or be afraid. There is grace enough in Christ; strength enough there; you shall not ask for it in vain. There is light enough in that great Luminary of the world and the Universe. Go live right under those beams, and you shall have light. We are only to go to the fountain *there* and take care of the fountain *here*, and we shall be full of light, and spread light, and do better for our Master than we sometimes have done.

2. I remark, secondly, we see how it comes to pass, that the faults, the sins, the derelictions of christians and the church, are so commonly exaggerated by men of the world. It seems, from what is said often in this quarter, that there is very little that is just, or lovely, or of good report in the church; and every thing in it that is dishonest, contentious and hateful. There is hypocrisy there, and every form and style of villainy—a very corrupt concern. Now this is gross and injurious falsehood—to be attributed in part to the world's hatred of godliness. They first *wish* to have it so, then they *make it* so. And they are helped to make it so, by the operation of the principle in our text.

The sinning of Christ's subjects is very conspicuous sinning. The sinning of the devil's subjects, very much more out of sight. In this latter case, it is a kingdom of darkness; they are deeds of darkness, done in an atmosphere of darkness. Who sees, or cares, or says anything about it. But in the latter case, it being darkness in a luminous body, as we have shown, it is clearly visible; and the strangeness and incongruity of the thing, bring all men to stare at it. We know that a little spot in the sun, gets more notice than all the sun's brightness; one single hour of eclipse, induces more attention, more talk, than ten years of his glorious shining. Here

now is the principle: hence it comes, that the church suffers so greatly, from small departures, limited offences: hence if one member suffers, all suffer with it: if one is charged with sin, all, in a sense, are charged with the same. The one sin becomes multiplied into a hundred sins. The little dim spot is spread and stretched, till it seems to cover the whole body with blackness.

It is admitted there is wrong in the church; but I rejoice to know that the wrong, in most instances, is as nothing, compared with what many in the world would make it. It is admitted there is not all the truth and righteousness in the church that there should be, and will be. But I rejoice in the fact, that there is more there than in all other places beside. I do believe this is a fact; indeed I believe that nearly all the heaven accepted righteousness on the earth, is in the church; though there be some darkness in her, still nearly all the light is there. And yet it is true, that vast multitudes go down to destruction, because Christians and the church are not what the yshould be.

3. I wish to make a third remark on this fact; first, give the reason *of* it, and then show that there is no reason in it. The reason of this fact—that so many perish on account of the inconsistencies of Christians, is found in the principle of our text, *how great the darkness.* It may be in itself a little spot; yet it fills the whole of that perverse eye, so that it can see nought but darkness. The consequence is, religion is not recommended, but stands dishonored before him; he rejects it; perhaps he scorns it; he keeps his sin, he comforts himself in his rebellion; and in the end he is a ruined being. This is the reason of his course. But as I said, there is no reason in it, because the church is not the ultimate standard. Christians are not the bible after all, though they be the only bible multitudes read. God has another bible back of them, and that is the bible God will support—that the standard he will bring and hold men to, and judge them by. His professed disciples may falsify every page, every doctrine, every precept; but that does not make it false. It abides notwithstanding, and will abide, as eternal truth—its promises—its threatenings—its uttered doom will be accomplished. Now, cannot rational men see, have they not sense enough to see, that this is the standard they ought to come to? Though all the church were unmitigated blackness, there is light here. Does not the caviller see, it is not enough that he has reasoned down the Christian's life? There is no safety for him till he has gone beyond and reasoned down the Bible—not only blotted out the arguments arising from the Christian's practice, but blotted out the arguments also, embodied in God's great and authoritive sayings. Even then in this extreme supposition, that it is all darkness on our part, where is the reason of the caviller's course? There is none—it is madness.

Take now the case as it is. Christians, as a body, do not falsify the Bible. Certainly there are those who illustrate all its spirit and teaching; there are many who do this; they are lights in the world; they perfect, and point, and clinch the Bible argument. They speak in their life, as God speaks in his word. Is there any reason, I ask, in making all this nothing?—all this *light* nothing?—all the sun's shining nothing; his spots everything? God calls attention to this light. Men choose the darkness; they might walk to heaven in this light; there is enough of it, and more than enough. They prefer to wrap themselves up in the darkness they find, and in that go down to death. They allow one professor's life, that is wrong, to sway them more than ten or twenty Christian lives that are right. Is there any reason in this? Ye men of reason and understanding, is there any?

How this course must appear hereafter. I have thought, sometimes, how the lost must feel when they look back and consider on what foolish grounds they went to hell; with what contemptible sophistry they were led on; with what meagre, miserable bait, they allowed the devil to take them.

O, my friends, this is far reaching business. You are fast moving to the eternal scene; there you will encounter a most searching light; there you will have to do, not with fables, but with the verities of God's unchanging word; there you will meet, not shadows, but solid and overwhelming realities. Look now to the right things. Yield to the dictates of reason, and to the urgencies of the gospel, and seek the things which are above, and perish not from that high position you occupy, of light and privilege and hallowed influence. If you do, your's will be a most fearful doom.

SERMON CCCCX.

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THE WAGES OF SIN.

"The wages of sin is death."—Rom. vi. 23.

That there are good and sufficient reasons, why the transgressor of God's law should receive a recompense of evil, and that a wo will come upon the workers of iniquity, are truths which need no labored proof. With the consciousness of doing wrong are associated in every human mind a sense of ill desert, and a fearful looking for of judgment. In these respects they who have not the written law, are a law to themselves. Even "the fool," who should say in his heart, "there is no God," would be very likely to expect, both in relation to himself and others, that the perpetrator of high-handed wickedness will receive by some fatality the reward of his doings. And yet it would not be safe to rely upon human estimates of the turpitude of sin, and of the evils which it merits. In deciding upon these subjects, we decide in our own case; we judge and condemn ourselves. Whatever punishment we admit to be the wages of sin, we acknowledge that we ourselves deserve. The slightest knowledge of human nature is sufficient to show, that the criminal at the bar is not the person correctly to estimate his own guilt, and to determine the degree of punishment, which may justly be inflicted. Not only are we liable to an erroneous judgment, by reason of the blinding influence of an inordinate self-love, but our views of the evil nature and tendencies of sin are of necessity very limited. Some sins are manifestly injurious to him who commits them, to the individual against whom they are committed, or to society in general. But the injury resulting in many instances, especially from sins of the heart, is not so conspicuous. Much of the evil, which sin tends to produce, is prevented by an over-ruling Providence. We often see conduct in itself sinful made an occasion of good. Even when the injurious effects of transgression are the most obvious, we do not always consider, we are unable fully to comprehend its malignity, in its relations to God

and his kingdom. Very plainly, therefore, we are not competent to determine the degree and the duration of that punishment, which the sinner deserves, but shall be almost sure exceedingly to underrate his sinfulness and ill desert. On these points we need a revelation from God; and since a revelation has been granted, communicating the needed instruction, it becomes us with unhesitating confidence to receive it. What sin is, in its nature, its effects, its tendencies, and what amount of evil is due for every instance of transgression, is perfectly clear to the mind of God; and in the volume of inspiration we have His testimony. One very important declaration, relative to the demerit of sin, is that of the inspired apostle in my text. The wages of sin is death. Sin is the master whom the sinner serves; and death is the compensation due for his services. The wages of sin is death; "but the gift of God," to them who serve him, "is everlasting life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." The wages of sin; the gift of God. To the servant of sin death is the deserved recompense; to the righteous eternal life is the gift, through a Mediator, of infinite grace.

The assertion of the text is, that the deserved recompense of sin is death. In this assertion what are we to understand by the word death? Let this point be settled, we shall then have the Divine testimony respecting the ill desert of sin, most clearly and fully given.

If the text is viewed in its connexion, it will be plainly seen, that the death intended is an evil, to be endured by the servants of sin only. Addressing himself to his brethren in Christ, the apostle inquires, "What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death; but now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Those vicious practises, in which you formerly indulged, terminate in death. But the service of God will end in everlasting life. For death is the sinner's recompense; but upon the righteous God will bestow eternal life. Very evidently from the death here spoken of, the righteous are exempted. It cannot therefore be temporal death; for this is common to all men. In this respect the servants of sin and the servants of God fare alike. Death in the text is not then the dissolution of the body.

It is an evil to which the servant of sin, continuing such, is liable, in distinction from the servant of God: and it excludes those, upon whom it is inflicted, from eternal life. Sin rewards those who are under his dominion with death. But God bestows upon his faithful servants eternal life. In these statements it is fairly implied, that those who inherit everlasting life, do not suffer death; and

that those who suffer death, do not inherit life eternal. The *end* of a sinful course is death, but the end of those, whose fruit is unto holiness, is everlasting life. If the death intended were followed by eternal life, the end of those things would not be death; but the end of both the righteous and the wicked would be the same, and upon them both would be conferred the same gift of God. But according to the teaching of the apostle, they who receive the gift of eternal life, are freed from that death, which is the wages of sin; and they, to whom these wages are paid, do not receive that precious gift.

But if death in the sense of the text will exclude from eternal life, it must be either annihilation, or endless misery. Which of these two are intended, the text and context do not afford the means of deciding. Let us now inquire, whether the term death be used in other parts of scripture, as in this portion of it; and if so, what additional light can be obtained respecting its meaning.

Now there are no words, more frequently used, in designating the rewards of the righteous and the wicked, than life and death. As a motive to obedience the promise is given, "he that doeth these things, shall live in them;" that is, shall prosper, shall be blessed, in doing them. By the death denounced upon the transgressor in the declaration, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," some calamity and suffering must be intended, the opposite of the blessedness, connected with obedience. When the psalmist says, "thou wilt show me the way of life," when Solomon affirms, "the fear of the Lord is the fountain of life, wisdom is a tree of life to them who lay hold upon her, he who keepeth sound wisdom and instruction, will find them the life of his soul," all must perceive that by life, not mere existence is intended, but happiness. On the other hand, when our Savior declares, "he that believeth in me shall never die," "if a man keep my sayings he shall not see death;" no one supposes that the dissolution of the body is meant. "Whose findeth me," saith Divine Wisdom, findeth life;" i. e. felicity and joy. "But all they that hate me, love death"—i. e. misery. They pursue the road to ruin with as much zeal, as if this were the object of their affection and choice. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." Of this latter declaration the meaning must be, that he who from love to the Savior sacrifices his earthly life, as a martyr, shall inherit life eternal; and of the former, that he who preserves his earthly existence by denying Christ, shall lose life eternal. "There is," says the the apostle John, "a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it." And why not pray for it? Plainly for this reason, that it is unto death. The meaning cannot be, that it will certainly issue in temporal death. For if this were all, it would not preclude prayer for pardon. The sin intended must be that

"sin against the Holy Ghost, which will not be forgiven, either in this world, or in the next."—"He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life;" i. e. everlasting felicity; "but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life," shall not partake of everlasting felicity, "but the wrath of God abideth on him." Not to see life, in this passage, denoting, as we may with good reason suppose, the same thing with death in my text, is to be excluded from the blessedness of Heaven, and to experience continued manifestations of the Divine displeasure. The wrath of God would not be spoken of as abiding on one, who was not in existence. The expression plainly signifies continued punishment, continued suffering.

I will now call your attention to a scriptural use of the terms life and death, differing somewhat from that, which has been noticed. We read of being dead "in trespasses and sins;" "to be carnally minded is death;" "he who liveth in pleasure is dead, while she liveth." On the other hand, we read of a "life" maintained by "faith in the Son of God;" and are told, that "to be spiritually minded is life." In these instances death denotes a state of great moral corruption, and life a state of holiness. The former is the character of the human heart while unrenewed: the latter is the result of regenerating grace. And hence to be renewed in the spirit of one's mind, is "to pass from death unto life." As holiness and happiness, sin and misery, are most intimately connected, it is not strange, that the same words should be employed to signify both. The term life, when applied to the righteous, usually, perhaps, includes the ideas of moral purity, and the happiness resulting from it. The life of the soul is a holy, happy existence. The death of the soul is a sinful, wretched existence. "He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." But in the heart of the true christian eternal life does abide; for he is the subject of those holy affections, which give present peace, and which brought to maturity will essentially constitute the blessedness of heaven. The death, on the contrary, in which the wicked abide, consists in those evil dispositions and habits, which often occasion on earth great disquietude, and when fully matured, will produce unutterable anguish. In the sense now explained, our first parents died on the very day of their transgression; and the death, which then began to come upon them, has passed upon the whole race. "If one died for all, then were all dead." Not annihilated, but sunk in sin and misery; dead, as to God, holiness, and heaven. To those, in whom spiritual life has been commenced and is sustained by the renewing, sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, the gospel gives the assurance, that they shall inherit life eternal. The "rest," into which by faith they "enter," shall be perfected in that unending rest, which "remain

eth for them" hereafter. And the death, in which the sinner now abides, will be consummated in that death, which they will experience, who lose eternal life, upon whom the wrath of God abideth, and who never have forgiveness.

The evidence already adduced from other portions of scripture, goes far to show, that by death, in my text and context, is not intended extinction of being, but a sinful wretched existence, that will never end. Other proof will now be alleged, still more conclusive.

In the Revelation mention is made of the second death. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Here it is asserted, that the faithful followers of Christ will not suffer the second death, and implied that others will. By the second death must be intended a calamity to be experienced after the dissolution of the body; the same, doubtless, that is signified by the death simply, when used in relation to the future, in other parts of scripture. Now what the revelator means by the second death he has very explicitly told us. "The fearful, and the unbelievng, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone. This is the second death." Rev. xxi. 8. To undergo the second death, then, is to have one's portion in the burning lake. Here we may notice,

1st. The time intended. The inspired writer had seen a vision of the risen dead, standing before God, and judged according to their works. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Then he describes the blessedness of those, whose names are written in the book of life, and immediately after declares, that the unbelieving and abominable shall suffer the second death. The time, then, in which the second death will be inflicted, is subsequent to the general resurrection and judgment.

2. The second death is a state of extreme suffering. It is represented as having one's part in a lake, burning with fire and brimstone. Very similar is the representation given by our Saviour, when he speaks of the wicked as being "cast, at the end of this world, into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

3. It will be a state of continued, endless suffering. In Rev. xx. 10, we are told that "the devil, which deceived the nations, was cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented" (i. e. the devil, the beast, and false prophet, for the verb is plural,) day and night, forever and ever." Now the beast and false prophet are symbols of large classes of wicked men, and there is no evidence that they will suffer a punishment of longer duration, than other wicked men. But their tor-

ments are to continue day and night forever and ever. This phrase, forever and ever, is used in the New Testament twenty times. In ten of these it is found in ascriptions of praise—as in the instance following—"to whom be glory forever and ever." In five instances it expresses the duration of the Divine existence, as when mention is made of "Him, who liveth forever and ever." Once it is applied to the duration of God's spiritual kingdom—"And he shall reign forever and ever." And once it expresses the perpetuity of that glory and felicity, which the saints will enjoy—"they shall reign forever and ever." In all these instances it signifies unquestionably endless duration. The same must be its meaning in the three other instances, in which it is used in relation to future punishment. One has been already quoted. The other two are as follows: "And her smoke rose up forever and ever." "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." If it is possible for language, unequivocally, to signify endless duration, it is signified in these passages. Our Savior also told his disciples, and the declaration is five times repeated in six verses, Mark ix. 43—48, that the fire, into which the wicked will be cast, shall never be quenched. I know it may be said, that if the fire is unquenchable, it does not follow that the wicked will always be tormented by it. But if this were not the fact, what conceivable motive could our Savior have to declare, that the fire would never be quenched? His intention was to awaken fear of the misery resulting from the indulgence of forbidden inclinations. But why should it alarm us, that the fire is unquenchable, were it not for the apprehension that the pains occasioned by it will never cease? In the Apocalypse it is expressly asserted, that "they shall be tormented forever and ever."

Thus far my object has been to ascertain the scriptural meaning of the word death, when employed, as in the text and context, to denote those evils, which are denounced against the wicked, in distinction from the righteous. These evils, it is evident, cannot consist in the dissolution of the body. As death is the end of a sinful course, and everlasting life of a holy one, as the sin unto death is a sin that will never be forgiven, and as expressions equivalent to death are, not seeing and losing life eternal, an evil must be intended, excluding from eternal life; and this must be either annihilation, or endless suffering. As the principal thing intended by eternal life is happiness, the fruit of holiness, so by the death, contrasted with it, we are to understand a state of suffering, the fruit of sin; and since suffering, thus occasioned, implies conscious existence under the continued dominion of sin, it cannot be annihilation, but unending misery; the abiding of the wrath of God upon the wicked for ever. In this conclusion we are confirmed by what is said in the revelation respecting the second

death. This is explained by having one's portion in the lake of fire. But the fire in which the wicked will suffer is unquenchable, and they who are cast into it will be tormented forever and ever.

Death, then, in the sense of my text, is endless misery. This is the wages of sin. Wages are the compensation due to any one for his services. The wages of sin are the compensation due to the servants of sin; in other words, the just recompense of sin, the punishment which the sinner deserves. Wages, usually, are a compensation previously agreed upon and promised; and when the apostle spoke of the wages of sin, he referred, without doubt, to the penalty or curse of the Divine law. This is the promised wages, so to speak, of the transgressor of the law; and it is death eternal, or endless misery.

But "the law" of God "is holy, just, and good," in its penalty, as well as in its precepts. To execute a punishment undeserved would be unjust and cruel; to threaten it as the award of justice, would be a falsehood. Let not such cruel injustice, or falsehood, be charged upon God. Were the penalty of the law unjust, there would be no grace in the gospel. Mercy need not interpose to redeem us from an unrighteous condemnation. Simple justice would demand it. When "God gave his beloved Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life," it was a most solemn declaration from Him who is most just and true, that the whole world deserved to perish. And herein is love, that for such a world God has provided such a Redeemer.

That unassisted reason would discover, that the transgressor of God's law is worthy of eternal death, I will not affirm; but most certainly it cannot establish the contrary. The measure of the penalty, due for the breach of any law, must be determined by the importance of the government, whose law is broken, and the magnitude of the interests involved. The punishment incurred by transgressing the law of the State, is more severe than is inflicted for transgressing the law of the family, or school, because the interests of the State are more extended and important. But the divine government embraces a far wider domain, than is that of the State, and is the guardian of interests incalculably greater. Those interests are absolutely immeasurable, and no one can prove, that the eternal destruction of him who rebels against the authority of the Sovereign of the universe, is more than is demanded by the enormity of his offence; or that God could have annexed to the violation of his law a less penalty, without being unfaithful to the interests of his kingdom. As we honor an earthly ruler, in proportion as he is faithful to the trust committed to him, and shrinks not from performing any duty, so let us feel that God is worthy of our reverence and gratitude for annexing to his law an appropriate

penalty, and for executing that penalty, without mitigation, in every instance, in which his own glory and the good of his great kingdom require it.

As to the *fact* of an endless retribution of evil—let it be admitted that the wicked deserve to suffer, and must and will suffer, while they continue to sin, who could with confidence predict, that they will not continue sinning forever, and suffering forever?

However we may speculate and reason upon the subject, the word of God will stand, and his purposes will be accomplished. "He is a God of truth, and without iniquity; righteous in all his ways, holy in all his works." In his decisions we may and should repose implicit confidence. Since He hath declared that eternal death is the wages of sin, ill would it become us to say, that our offences do not merit a sentence so severe.

Having established, as I conceive, the true interpretation of the text, I would now call your attention to some inferences from it.

1. We infer the extreme turpitude and malignity of sin. The mind of God is not perverted by any improper partialities, or corrupt inclinations. With him there is no darkness, nor error. He is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed in an unerring balance. But he has pronounced the wages of sin to be death, even that death of the soul, from which there is no resurrection—a death which will terminate, not existence, but enjoyment—a death of comfort, virtue, and hope. How inexpressibly malignant must that be, which merits in the Divine judgment so severe a doom. When the Lord expelled our first parents from the garden of Eden, cursing the ground for their sake, and making them liable to sorrow, sickness, and death; when he consumed with fire the cities of the plain; when he commissioned his people Israel to extirpate the Canaanites with the edge of the sword; when at various periods he visited the Jews with desolating judgments, and at length destroyed their national existence, and scattered them among all nations, to be everywhere persecuted and trampled upon; when he smote with instant death Ananias and Sapphira for uttering a falsehood; when he denied Moses, his servant, the privilege, so earnestly desired, of entering the land of promise, because he had spoken unadvisedly with his lips; in all these instances something may be seen of that displeasure, with which a righteous God beholds the workers of iniquity. But when we hear the law proclaiming the soul that sinneth it shall die, the wages of sin is death; when we see the wicked cast into the lake of fire, and the smoke of their torment ascending up forever and ever; then are we most emphatically taught, that it is "an evil thing and a bitter" to disobey God. He views every object as it is. If sin is that "abominable thing" which he hateth, it is "ex-

ceedingly sinful;" if he is "angry with the wicked every day," there is good reason for this displeasure; if he has threatened to "punish them with everlasting destruction," this is the portion, which they justly deserve.

2. If endless misery is the wages of sin, this is the doom, which might in perfect justice be passed and executed upon us all. "There is not a just man upon earth who doeth good and sinneth not." "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "The whole world has become guilty before God." What though you have not been guilty of crimes against the peace and welfare of community? The law of God doth not say, the robber, the incendiary, the murderer, but "the soul that sinneth, it shall die"—"cursed is every one who continueth not in all things, which God hath commanded to do them." The malignity of sin does not consist chiefly in this, that it is a violation of human laws, and injurious to human beings. It is rebellion against the most high God; it is a violation of those sacred obligations, by which we are bound to love and serve our Creator; it is opposed to the laws of his government; it tends to defeat his purposes, to obscure his glory, to spread discord and ruin through his empire. In these respects all sins agree. Some offences, doubtless, are more heinous than others; and some offenders deserve a punishment, peculiarly severe. But all sin is committed against God; and every transgressor of his law deserves death.

As intelligent, accountable beings, all men are under law; and none can be justified by an obedience, which none have rendered. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin," and of that death, which is the wages of sin. But if none are justified by the law, all are condemned by it; and if our future condition is to be decided by our conformity, or want of conformity to that perfect rule, there is no hope; and "nothing remains but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

On no subject are we in greater danger of entertaining lax and erroneous opinions, than of our own sinfulness and ill desert. And yet on no subject is it more important, that our views should be in agreement with "the true sayings of God." "Judgment has come upon all men to condemnation." We are included. Let us understand this, and be suitably affected by it. It will not be conducive to the cure of our spiritual diseases, to deny their existence; it will not open our prison doors, to imagine that we are free; it will not secure an interest in the great salvation, to believe that we do not need it. Let the truth come home to our hearts—that we have broken, in instances innumerable, the good law of our Maker;

that we are righteously condemned by it; and that if sovereign mercy do not interpose for our deliverance, we are lost, irrecoverably, to God, and holiness, and heaven. Well does it become us to lie low before the eternal Majesty, and with a humble, broken spirit, each one of us to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

3. If sin deserves endless misery, how wonderful is that grace which bringeth salvation. God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up; the Son came down from heaven, assumed our nature, became a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, endured the contradiction of sinners, hid not his face from shame and spitting, and went as a lamb to the slaughter; for whom? For convicted criminals, condemned by a righteous sentence to eternal death. "God hath commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Consider, too, what blessings Christ died to procure; not alleviation of future sufferings; not merely entire deliverance from them; but, in addition to this, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Were there any thing incredible in our religion it would be this—that to beings so guilty the High and Holy One has been so condescending and gracious. But we will not cavil and object; we will humbly and thankfully adore the wisdom, whose counsels are a great deep; "the unsearchable riches" of infinite grace; "the love that passeth knowledge."

4. If sin deserves endless punishment, all arguments against the infliction of it, derived from the justice and goodness of God, must be inconclusive. That no such inference can with propriety be drawn from the justice of God, is perfectly obvious. It cannot be unjust to inflict deserved punishment. Dr. Chauncy has acknowledged that, if "the next state is a state of punishment, not intended for the cure of the patients themselves, but to satisfy the justice of God, and give warning to others, it is impossible that all men should finally be saved."

But if endless punishment is consistent with the justice of God, it cannot be proved irreconcilable with his goodness. The great object of divine benevolence is the good of the universe. The happiness of individuals is sought in subordination to this. When the good of an individual would be inconsistent with the general good, the benevolence of God will induce him to sacrifice the former to the latter. How then can *we* decide, what measures the goodness of God will lead him to adopt with respect to the guilty? That he will never do injustice we know; that he will always be infinitely benevolent, we cannot doubt. But how far his benevolence will lead him to confer undeserved favors, we cannot determine; be-

cause, with our limited views, we cannot know, whether the communication of such benefits in any given instance would be friendly, or injurious, to the great interests of his kingdom.

Let it be supposed, that under the government of some earthly monarch, distinguished for his justice and benevolence, certain persons have been legally arraigned, and after a fair trial convicted of deeds worthy of death; could it with certainty be inferred, from the benevolence of the monarch, that the sentence of the violated law would not be executed? Should any one, unacquainted with the state of the country, and incapable of foreseeing the influence upon community of punishment on the one hand, and of pardon on the other, confidently assert, that the execution of the criminal would be inconsistent with the monarch's goodness, might he not be justly charged with presumptuously intermeddling with things too high for him? How then can we venture to affirm, that the goodness of God will not permit the righteous penalty of his law to be fulfilled? How do we know, that the just punishment of transgressors cannot advance the general good? That the happiness of God's kingdom cannot be promoted more effectually by destroying its enemies, than by sparing them? Unless we can prove that this is impossible, no arguments in favor of universal salvation, derived from the Divine benevolence, will be of any avail.

It is not uncommon for those, who would infer the final happiness of all from the goodness of God, to appeal to our feelings. 'Have not you a desire,' they say, 'that all should be finally happy, and is God less benevolent than you are? He is the Father of his creatures; and would a father consign his children to everlasting burnings?' Of one who thus reasons, I would inquire, does it give you pleasure to observe the pains and sorrows of your fellowmen in this world? Had you the power, should you possess the inclination, to bring upon them those evils, by which they are now afflicted? Would you send abroad "the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day?" Would you permit the blood-thirsty pirate and the cruel slaveholder to live and prosper? Would you torture your infant child with excruciating pain? Would you deprive a beloved son of his reason, or reduce him to beggary? Yet these things do occur under the government of God; and if the afflictions of this life are not inconsistent with his benevolence, it is impossible to show, that those of a future state will be, even though they should continue through endless ages.

What will be the condition of human beings hereafter, he can tell us, who "brought life and immortality to light." It is not our province to decide, what measures the perfections of God require him to adopt. His ways are above our ways, his thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Whatever he has been pleased to

reveal, it becomes us, with a humble, teachable spirit, to receive.

5. If the sinner deserve endless punishment, this will be his portion. "Wo to the wicked! it shall go ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him," Isa. iii. 11. He shall receive the punishment which he deserves, and which God has threatened to inflict. "He shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy, James ii. 13. "If any man worship the beast and his image, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation," Rev. xiv. 9. 10. To have judgment without mercy, and to drink of the wrath of God without mixture, plainly signify to be punished to the full extent of what justice demands, to suffer all that one deserves. When our Savior had concluded the parable of the servant, who owed his master 10,000 talents, he made (Mark xviii. 35.) the following application. "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses"—i. e. he shall treat you, as the king treated his wicked, cruel servant. How that was, he had just told them. "And his lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." Those persons, therefore, who do not possess a forgiving spirit, are to be punished for their sins, until they shall have suffered all which they deserve, and the claims of justice are fully satisfied. But that period will never arrive. When ages of suffering shall have passed away, a debt will still remain, which future ages of suffering will not be able to discharge.

The argument is this. The sinner deserves endless punishment. The scriptures plainly testify that he will suffer, continuing impenitent until the close of life, all which he deserves. He will suffer, then, endless punishment. Not only is death his wages, but death is the end of the path, in which he is now travelling. "Oh, wicked man, thou shalt surely die." "As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death." "As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Why this affecting expostulation, this earnest entreaty, if it were not a principle, as immovably fixed, as is the throne of the Eternal, that if the sinner turn not, he must and will die? Die not merely the death of the body—this he would not avoid by turning—from this repentance would not save him—but that second death beyond the grave, the ever-enduring death of the soul.

It is true, that Jesus Christ has died a "propitiation for our sins;" and the promise is sure, that the penitent shall be forgiven,

the believer shall be saved. God hath told us, that he would have "all men come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved;" and all are most urgently invited to turn and live. But who shall he be redeemed from the curse of the law, who does not receive Christ, and secure, upon the terms proposed, forgiveness through his blood? What other name is given among men, whereby they may be saved? The blessings of salvation are not promised to all indiscriminately. How can they be saved from sin, who persist in the love and practice of sin? To the unbelieving and disobedient, Christ himself is a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." Vengeance will come upon them for not obeying the Gospel. Simply to "neglect so great salvation" is certain ruin.

Let us all be persuaded to lay these things to heart. We all have been the abject slaves of sin; and if not made free by the regenerating Spirit, we are in bondage still. Bondage indeed it is. "The way of transgressors is hard;" and it leads on to death. No one ever hardened himself against God and prospered. Against this glorious Being we have rebelled; by serving sin we have waged war with God. Persevering in this warfare, our recompense will be death; not the dissolution of the body, not extinction of being, but that final separation from all that is holy and blessed; that hopeless abandonment to all that is evil and tormenting; that unutterable anguish of a mind in perpetual conflict with itself and with God, which constitute most truly the death of the soul; a death to be endured, not for a few years, not for a single century, not for thousands of ages, but for eternity. How long does a single night appear, which is spent in constant, excruciating pain. Minutes seem hours, and hours ages. Think of the situation of him who is languishing under an incurable disease, occasioned by his own folly, tortured with incessant agony, and hopeless of relief. Behold him suffering, day after day, the tortures of an aching body and an upbraiding conscience. Hear him cry out "in the morning, would God it were evening; and in the evening, would God it were morning. When I lie down I say, when shall I rise and the night be gone; and I am full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day. The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit. The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." To spend one's life, to linger fifty, seventy, or eighty years in such misery, how insupportable the idea! What if life were lengthened to the age of the Antediluvians. How terrible to pass a thousand years in constant suffering, like that of the living body in the midst of burning flame! But what are a thousand years in comparison with eternity? Infinitely less than than a drop in the ocean.

Needless alarm, causeless disquietude, I have no wish to produce. But I do beseech you to consider, what God has been

pleased to reveal of the future and eternal condition of impenitent men. If you saw a fellow-creature, carelessly slumbering on the brink of a precipice, would you not endeavor to save him? If your neighbor's house were on fire, and he were in imminent danger of being consumed, would you not sound the alarm? And shall not he, who beholds the sinner slumbering on the verge of perdition, warn him of his danger? Shall he be censured for preaching terror, and for attempting unduly to move the passions of his hearers, who tells them, in the language of inspiration, the end of these things is death, they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever?

If, unpardoned sin will be punished with eternal death, it is the extreme of presumptuous folly to delay repentance. The pleasures of sin are but for a season; the pains resulting from it will never cease. But they who believing in Christ take up their cross and follow him, though in this world they may have tribulation, will not be left comfortless, and in the world to come will inherit life everlasting.

Ye, who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, and are not careful to obey his commands, the day is at hand, when "the King will come in His glory, and will reward every man according to his works," Will it then give you pleasure, that you have spent the season of your probation in minding earthly things, and slighting the Friend who died to redeem you? At present you may believe, that your sins are few and of small magnitude; and that if you maintain a fair reputation among men, it is not indispensable, that you should walk humbly with God, set your affections on things above, and live the life of faith in a crucified risen Redeemer. You hope that a liberal allowance will be made for human infirmity; and that the merit of your virtues will atone for your frailties and imperfections. But what saith the Scripture? "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."—"God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." The wages of sin, of all sin, of every sin, is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The sins and deficiencies of the penitent and believing will indeed be forgiven; for "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." But you are not Christ's. Not being renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his. You have not passed from death unto life. You are under the curse, as transgressors of the law, as rejecters of the Gospel; and whether you are more or less guilty, than some others, with whom you may compare yourselves, the wrath of God abideth on you, and for you is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Do you refuse to take warning? Living as you now live, with

the heart that you now have, will you still indulge the hope, that your end will be everlasting life? Take heed, that you proceed upon sure ground, that you build your hope upon a stable foundation; expose not your own soule to the peril of eternal death; for "what is man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?" Soon will your eternal doom be decided at that dreadful tribunal from which there is no appeal.

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.